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PALESTINE BEFORE THE COMING OF ISRAEL

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Palestine had had a long history before the coming of Israel. This history, formerly unsuspected, has been in recent years remarkably, though as yet only in part, revealed to us.

Our first hint of a historical reference to this part of the world occurs in the inscription of Lugalzaggisi, king of Babylonia, about 4000 B.C. This king claims to have reached in his raids the "Upper Sea," i.e., the Mediterranean.¹ At what point he reached the Mediterranean coast he does not tell us. Probability points, however, to northern Syria. Sargon I, who ruled in Babylonia about 3800 B.C., conquered the land of "Martu," a name explained in the tablets of a later period as "the land of the Amorites." The Amorites, as we shall see, lived in the region of the Lebanon mountains and the hill country to the south of them, so that Sargon, perhaps, conquered northern Palestine. Business documents were dated in Babylonia in the year of this conquest,² so that we are assured that the conquest of so distant a land duly impressed the Babylonians. We have no means of knowing what the condition of Palestine was at this far-off period, or who inhabited it. The excavation of Gezer by Mr. Macalister has, however, afforded us some knowledge of a people resident there at a time probably about 3000 B.C., and perhaps we shall not go astray if we suppose that the country was peopled by a similar race and supported a similar civilization in the time of Sargon.

The earliest people found at Gezer were small of stature, being but an inch or two over five feet in height. They lived in caves, some of which were natural, and some of which were excavated in the rock. They were ignorant of the use of metal, but had knives of flint. Their household utensils, so far as known to us, consisted

¹ Thureau-Dangin, *Les inscriptions de Sumer et d'Akkad*, p. 219.

² See Radau, *Early Babylonian History*, p. 159.

of smooth stones for crushing grain and for various other purposes. These men surrounded the hill of Gezer with a rude fortification. This consisted of a wall of small stones about four feet high, against the outside of which a curved bank of earth was packed. Over this earth a second layer of similar stones was placed. Such a rampart was not a great protection, but perhaps sufficed against the foes of this primitive period. This race burned their dead, worshiped an earth deity which, like themselves, was supposed to dwell in a cave, and apparently sacrificed swine to this deity.³

The Bible tells of an aboriginal people east of the Jordan called Horites, a name which, perhaps, means cave-dwellers. Possibly cave-dwellers persisted there longer than they did at Gezer. A clan of these Horites was called Lotan (Gen. 36:20). One of the Egyptian names for Palestine from about 2000⁴ B. C. onward was "Retenu," or "Rutenu," philologically equivalent to Lotan. It is possible, therefore, that the first Palestinians with whom the Egyptians came into contact, were cave-dwellers. Indeed, it is possible that the Egyptians came into contact with this race of cave-dwelling inhabitants at Gezer, for an expedition was sent about 2600 B. C. by Pepi I, Sixth Dynasty, to chastise Asiatics, and in its progress reached the hills of southern Palestine (see Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. I, p. 144 notes *c* and *d*). Such is the earliest glimpse which investigation makes possible of that country which we reverently call the Holy Land. At a date which Mr. Macalister estimates as about 2500⁵ B. C., Gezer was captured by another race which, from the skeletons found, is thought to be Semitic. This people surrounded the hill with a much more substantial and formidable wall, and also erected a "high place" containing a remarkable row of "pillars" such as are frequently denounced in the Old Testament.

About 2500 B. C. (if not earlier⁶) a new wave of Semitic population swept over Babylonia. Many of these new people bore names of a peculiar type, a type also found in southern and central Palestine as

³ See R. A. S. Macalister, *Bible Side Lights from the Mound of Gezer*, chaps. i and ii.

⁴ See Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. I, p. 234, note *c*.

⁵ Macalister, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 ff.

⁶ Johns, *Expositor* (April, 1906, p. 341), thinks it may have been as early as 3800 B. C.

early as 1900–1400 B. C., as we know from Egyptian monuments.⁷ Now in the time of the first dynasty of Babylon we begin to find the name “Amorite” and references to the “Amorite country” spelled out syllabically *Amurru*⁸. As has been said, the land Martu is defined as the land of the Amorite (*Amurru*). In Assyrian inscriptions Martu is often an ideogram for Syria and Palestine. Moreover, in the el-Amarna letters (fourteenth century B. C.), Amorites were settled in the great valley between the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges,⁹ and the E-document, written in Ephraim, has preserved the tradition (Num. 13:29) that before the coming of Israel the Amorites inhabited the hill country of Palestine. When all these facts are co-ordinated it becomes probable that a wave of Amorite Semites overran Babylonia, Syria, and Palestine as early as 2500 B. C. We cannot definitely prove that the Semites who drove the cave-dwellers from Gezer were Amorites, but the facts just stated, coupled with the fact that the Babylonian name for all of Palestine and Syria at this period was “the land of the Amorites,” make it probable that they were.

Not only was the Mediterranean coast well known in Babylon, but interesting evidence has recently appeared to show that intercourse between Babylon and the land of the Amorites at this period was very frequent. A tablet from about 2100 B. C. found at Sippar contains a contract¹⁰ in which a wagon or cart belonging to one man is leased for a year to another, and it is stipulated in this document that the vehicle shall not during the year be driven to the land of *Kittim*. Now *Kittim*, as has been noted by several scholars, is one of the Old Testament names for the coast-lands of the Mediterranean. It is a synonym of *Amurru* or the Amorite land, i. e., Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. Many Babylonians must have been making such journeys when a man had to stipulate that his wagon should not be driven thither.

Such frequent intercourse as this implies accounts for the fact

⁷ See Breasted, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 238; W. Max Müller, *Asien und Europa*, p. 162; Ranke, *Early Babylonian Personal Names*, p. 19, and Paton, *Early History of Syria and Palestine*, pp. 26 ff.

⁸ See Meissner, *Altbabylonisches Privatrecht*, No. 42.

⁹ See Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Vol. V, Nos. 42, 44, and 50.

¹⁰ See Delitzsch and Haupt, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, Vol. V, pp. 429 ff.

that some centuries later Babylonian customs and culture had so permeated the country that its inhabitants, even in writing to kings of Egypt, employed the Babylonian language and its cuneiform script instead of the Egyptian language and its hieroglyphic script.

About 1750-1700 B. C. an important westward movement of races occurred, which affected the whole region extending from Babylonia to Egypt. The Kassites pushed from the east into the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley, and so completely subdued it that they established a dynasty on the throne of Babylon, which held sway there for 576 years. About the same time the Mitanni pushed themselves into the upper part of the Euphrates valley, which they continued to hold for three or four hundred years. The invasion of this region by these two peoples pushed westward before them tribe after tribe across Asia and even into Egypt. It was this movement which drove into Egypt those Asiatics who conquered that country and whose monarchs are known as the Hyksos kings.

That this movement affected Palestine and Syria is certain. It is altogether probable that these people conquered Palestine before they conquered Egypt. The fact that they made their chief stronghold at Avaris on the Asiatic frontier of Egypt instead of in the heart of the country, indicates that there rested on their shoulders the task of maintaining order in Asia as well as in Africa. The statement (Num. 13:22) that Hebron was built seven years before Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt may be a recollection of this conquest, and there are other indications that during the Hyksos period intimate relations were maintained between Syria and Egypt.¹¹

It is probable, though we cannot absolutely prove it, that it was with the migration just described that the Canaanites came into Palestine. We know that in the fourteenth century B. C. they were living in Phoenicia and on the seacoast to the south of it, and had given their name to the low-country, for the el-Amarna letters call the region the land of the *Kinahhi* or *Kinahni*,¹² i. e., Canaanites. We learn from Deut. 3:9 that the language of the Canaanites differed only dialectically from that of the Amorites. It is probable, therefore, that the former were in reality a later wave of the migration of

¹¹ See Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 67, and Breasted, *History of Egypt*, p. 218.

¹² See *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Vol. V, No. 30, l. 41, and No. 151, l. 50.

the latter, and the time at which they entered Palestine was in all probability about 1700 B. C.

The J-document, written by a resident of Judah, calls the pre-Israelitish inhabitants of the land Canaanites,¹³ while, as we have seen, E, writing in Ephraim, says the Amorite dwelt in the mountain and the Canaanite in the maritime plain (Num. 13:29). Probably this means that in their struggle with the Amorites the Canaanites in the north succeeded only in obtaining the coast land, where in later time they developed into the Phoenicians, while in Judah they succeeded in capturing the hill country. Thus the Amorites were confined to the narrower limits of the Palestinian highlands, and the valley between the two ranges of Lebanon.

The recent excavations at Gezer by Macalister, at Taanak by Sellin, and at Tell-el-Mutesellim by Schumacher, have given us a vivid portrayal of some of the most important features¹⁴ of the civilization of this Amorite-Canaanite race. Their temples were open-air "high places," containing such "pillars" as are so frequently denounced in the Old Testament. Here they worshiped the Semitic mother goddess and her male counterpart, often devoting as offerings emblems which to us are obscene. They had an altar of earth for their sacrifices, but sometimes, as at Taanak, a most curiously wrought altar of baked clay,¹⁵ possibly as an altar of incense. They were a strong race, and built powerful walls for their cities. They were familiar with the use of bronze, but not, apparently, with the use of iron.

As early as 1400 B. C., or thereabout, Hittites from Asia Minor began to push down into northern Syria, and established a flourishing kingdom at Kadesh on the Orontes, just at the northern end of the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon mountains, where in the course of the next three hundred years they were destined to play an important part.

The impact of the Hyksos upon Egypt caused a reaction, and when under the Eighteenth Dynasty the Egyptians regained their independence, they retaliated by carrying conquest into Asia. Amosis

¹³ Gen. 24:3-7; 38:2; Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:3, 11; Num. 14:43, 45; 21:1, 3; Judg. 1:1, 5, 17, 28, 29, 30, 32.

¹⁴ See, e. g., Macalister, *op. cit.*, chap. iii.

¹⁵ See Sellin, *Tell Taanek*, p. 75.

I and Amenophis I began these campaigns between 1580 and 1550 B. C., and Thothmes I at the beginning of his reign ruled to the Euphrates.¹⁶ Thothmes I afterward made an expedition into Asia to quell a revolt. He seems to have met with little resistance until he reached the land of Naharina, which stretched away from the Orontes to the Euphrates. Here he won a severely contested battle and afterward erected a stone boundary tablet by the side of the Euphrates, to mark the northeastern boundary of his dominions.¹⁷

During the reigns of Thothmes II and Hatshepsut nothing was attempted by the Egyptians in Asia. The native tribes accordingly worked their will there until Thothmes III gained the Egyptian scepter. Then in the year 1479 he made his first campaign into Asia. His Annals enable us to trace his march by Gaza along the maritime plain to the Carmel range, then through the pass to Megiddo. As centuries later king Josiah met Necho, another Egyptian king, at this pass, so Thothmes was now met by a strong alliance of the petty kings of the region beyond. Giving them battle he defeated them, afterward taking Megiddo by siege.¹⁸ He then pushed on and conquered the country up to the Lebanon. When two years later he made another campaign into Syria the fame of his arms had extended into far-off Assyria, so that the king of that country sent him a rich present.¹⁹ In succeeding years Thothmes made fifteen²⁰ other campaigns into the country, in the course of which he subdued the whole region up to the Euphrates, where he erected a stone boundary-tablet beside that of his father, Thothmes I.²¹ This Pharaoh probably strengthened the fortification of various important cities of the region. At least the great wall of the city of Gezer, discovered by Mr. Macalister, seems to date from this general period.²² This thoroughly conquered territory he organized into an empire which held together through the reigns of the next three Egyptian kings, and finally went to pieces in the reign of Amenophis IV, because that monarch was more interested in theology than in politics.

¹⁶ See Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. II, pp. 8-12 and 30 ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 34 ff., 202.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-217.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 179 ff.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²² Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

The accounts of the campaigns of Thothmes III mention for the first time a number of Palestinian names with which the reader of the Bible is very familiar, such as Gaza, Gezer, Joppa, Ono, Megiddo, Kadesh, Magdala, and Damascus, showing that these cities existed at that far-off time.²³ Among these names of places there are two that are curiously interesting, Jacob-el and Joseph-el.²³ They were apparently situated in what was afterward the territory of Manasseh and Ephraim. At this period, then, these patriarchal names were already attached to Palestinian localities.

On the death of Thothmes III in 1447 b. c. some of the petty kings in the northeastern part of his Asiatic territory revolted, and compelled his successor, Amenophis II, to undertake a military campaign to subdue them. This king won a victory somewhere near the Orontes over seven rebellious princes and afterward put them to death.²⁴ On the accession of the next king, Thothmes IV, in 1420 b. c., another rebellion made another campaign necessary.²⁵ These military expeditions marched probably across Palestine, though sometimes, as in the reign of Thothmes III, soldiers may have been transported to Phoenicia in ships. These three Egyptian monarchs by their government over these Asiatic tribes so imposed upon them the habit of submission that the next king, Amenophis III (1411-1375), found it unnecessary to make any campaign in Asia.²⁶ He maintained friendly relations with the kings of Mittani, Assyria, and Babylon, and married a daughter of the king of Mitanni.²⁷ During the next reign, that of Amenophis IV (1375-1358), we gain our most complete and most interesting view of Palestine before the coming of Israel. The king was so deeply interested in reforming the theology of Egypt that he paid little attention to his Asiatic dominions. The vassal kings, left to their own devices, began each to seek his own aggrandizement. The memory of previous chastisements by Egyptian monarchs was so strong, and the fear of each king that his plans would be betrayed to Egypt by some rival, before he was strong enough to withstand the wrath of his suzerain, so great, that they with one

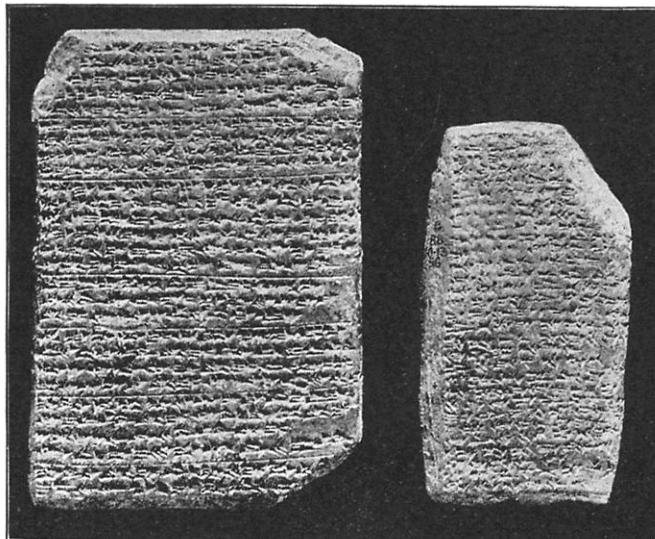
²³ W. Max Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-64.

²⁴ See Breasted, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 304 ff., 313. ²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 324 ff.

²⁶ See *Keilinschriflliche Bibliothek*, Vol. V, No. 87, ll. 62-64.

²⁷ Breasted, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 347.

accord sent letters to Amenophis, each protesting his loyalty, and each accusing the others of rebellion. These letters found at el-Amarna, the site of the new capital city of Amenophis IV, constitute the bulk of that remarkable correspondence. That they are written in the Babylonian language and script, although directed to the king of Egypt after the country had been for a hundred years under Egyptian rule, is strong testimony to the deep impress which the civilization of Babylonia had made upon Palestine and Syria in the older Amorite



TABLET FROM TEL-EL-AMARNA, 1450 B. C.

time. Although Babylonian was employed for this correspondence, the words and idioms, identical with those of biblical Hebrew, which these letters reveal, prove that the language afterward spoken by Israel was already the language of Palestine.

The principal chieftains who wrote these letters to Amenophis were the king of the Amorites, the Phoenician kings of Gebel (Byblos), Beruta (Beirut), Tyre and Sidon, and the following kings of Palestine: Abdi-Kheba of Jerusalem, Zimridda of Lachish, and Yapakhi of Gezer. Letters from several others, such as the king of Hazor, are also found. From these sources we learn that the Amorites inhabited at this period the elevated valley between the two Lebanon

ranges, the Canaanites were in possession of Phoenicia and the coast land, and that hostile hordes, known as the "Khabiri" ("confederates"?) were ravaging many parts of the country.

The six letters²⁸ from the king of Jerusalem are probably the most interesting of all these documents to the Bible student, for they give us the earliest information yet known to history of that city about which the affections of the world's best religion have for three thousand years entwined themselves. From these letters we obtain a glimpse of Jerusalem three hundred and fifty years earlier than any obtained from other sources.

The throne of Jerusalem was at this period occupied by Abdi-kheba. He had not inherited the scepter, but had been placed in the position by the king of Egypt, whose vassal he was. Jerusalem was the head of a considerable territory, which was called the country of Jerusalem. Similar districts belonged to other cities, such as Gezer and Askelon.

When these letters were written this territory of Jerusalem was invaded by the Khabiri, and Abdi-kheba believed that they were aided by one or more of the petty kings to the west of him. These kings, as their letters show, were writing to Amenophis that Abdi-kheba was a traitor. He in his turn not only protests his fidelity to his suzerain, but accuses his accusers of treachery. The insistent note in his correspondence is, however, that the territory of the king is being destroyed, and that if an Egyptian army is not sent in "this year" no land will remain to the king. As we have noted, Amenophis was too deeply absorbed in religious matters to care for the fortunes of his Asiatic dependencies. Suddenly in the midst of their insistent cry the letters of Abdi-kheba cease. No army was sent and no doubt Jerusalem fell into the hands of the invading Khabiri.

The fate of Jerusalem is indicative of the way in which the Egyptian empire went to pieces at this time, and Palestine and Syria broke up into petty states, and general anarchy ensued.

Much speculation has been bestowed upon who the Khabiri may have been. Philologically the name may be equivalent to "Hebrews," and some scholars have supposed that they were Hebrews. Most think, however, that they cannot have been Hebrews as the

²⁸ *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Vol. V, Nos. 179-85.

latter are known to history, but it is quite possible that they constituted an advance-wave of that Aramaean migration out of which the Hebrews, by fusion with Arabic, Amoritic, and Canaanite clans, were developed. At all events it was about this time that a new wave of immigration can be traced through the Tigris-Euphrates valley into Syria and Palestine, which was called by ancient writers Aramaean. We first come upon a reference to the Aramaeans by name in an inscription of Shalmeneser I of Assyria²⁹ about 1300 B. C. About the same time they are mentioned by Rameses II, who met them in Syria.³⁰ It is altogether probable that their advent into these regions antedated the earliest reference to them in inscriptions by some years, and that the Khabiri were a part of them. In any case the next important event known to us after the period represented by the el-Amarna letters is the coming of the Aramaeans. This event is of great significance for it represents the movement which resulted in the formation of the Israelitish people of later history. There is a tradition concerning one of the Patriarchs which makes him an Aramaean (Deut. 26:5), and the account of Jacob's marriage to the daughters of Laban³¹ preserves the memory that there was a large proportion of Aramaic blood in the Israelites. Then Abraham³² and Joseph³³ are called Hebrews, a name philosophically equivalent to Khabiri. It seems probable on the whole therefore that this Aramaean migration is the westward movement which brought the Khabiri into Palestine and the memory of which is preserved in the accounts of Abraham.

If this be so it was probably at this period that the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, whom the Hebrews regarded as close kindred, and who they tell us gained a settled habitat before the time of Moses, secured their respective territories on the east of the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Arabah.

After the reign of Amenophis IV, in which we have such vivid evidence of the decay of Egyptian power and of the increase of disorder in Palestine, nearly half a century passed before Egypt produced a king capable of reasserting her sway in Asia. During this

²⁹ Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. III, p. 4, No. 1.

³⁰ W. Max Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 222, 234.

³¹ Gen., chaps. 29-31.

³² Gen. 14:13.

³³ Gen. 39:14, 41:12.

period of disorder the Hittites pushed down from Asia Minor in larger numbers and so firmly entrenched themselves at Kadesh on the Orontes that they were strong enough to dispute the extension of Egyptian rule over northern Syria.

It was in the reign of Seti I (1313-1292) that an attempt was made once more to regain the lost empire in Asia.

In the very first year of his reign Seti invaded Canaan, overran the coast to Mt. Carmel, captured cities in the plain of Jezreel, set up a monument in the Hauran, conquered Yenoam at the southern extremity of Lebanon, occupied the Phoenician coast as far north as Tyre, and possibly farther, and obtained cedar from Lebanon to carry back to Egypt.³⁴

Later in his reign a rebellion occurred in northern Galilee, and Seti was compelled to besiege Kadesh in Galilee. Winning a victory at Kadesh, he endeavored to proceed up the great valley to the north between the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges. Here he came into conflict with the now powerful Hittites, over whom he claims also to have won a victory.³⁵

Seti's son and successor, Rameses II (1292-1225 B. C.), led an army into Asia in his first year, probably for the sake of quelling such rebellions as always sprang up on the accession of a new king. At this time he pushed as far north as the modern Beirût, where he left an inscription on the rocks by the Dog River.³⁶ In the fifth year of his reign, 1388 B. C., he again penetrated Asia, led his army over Lebanon, and endeavored to capture Kadesh, the Hittite capital.³⁷ A severely contested battle followed, in which Rameses nearly lost his life, but which he claimed as a great victory. It is clear, however, that it was not a victory, for the Hittites were not conquered, and Rameses some years later made a remarkable treaty with them.³⁸ This document, one of the earliest international treaties on record, provides for the extradition of political prisoners, an offensive and defensive alliance on the part of the two countries, and in general evinces a high degree of civilization.

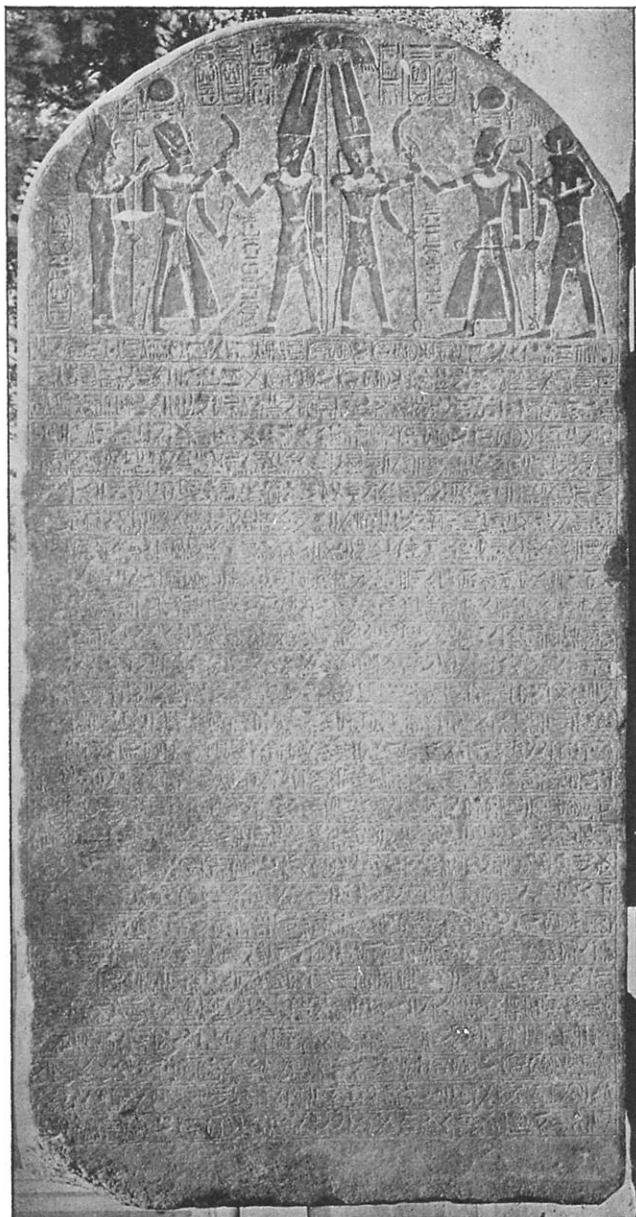
³⁴ Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. III, pp. 37-49.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 67-75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-57, and "Battle of Kadesh" in the *Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago*, Ser. I, Vol. V.

³⁸ Breasted, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 159-74.



THE VICTORIOUS HYMN OF MERNEPTAH CONTAINING, IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE SECOND LINE FROM BELOW, THE NAME OF ISRAEL

From a photograph by Brugsch]

Some time before the eighth year of Rameses, Palestine revolted again, and had to be reconquered.³⁹ Thus the waves of war continued to roll over the land. With the friendly co-operation of the Hittites, Rameses II appears to have been able to maintain peace in Palestine during the remainder of his reign. At least the record of other wars in this quarter has not reached us.

With the accession of the next Pharaoh, Menephtah (1235–1215 B. C.), revolt once more overspread the whole of Palestine. A hymn of victory from this king recites the conquest of Canaan, Askelon, Gezer, Yenoam, Israel, and Palestine.⁴⁰ The list is worded so as to make it clear that Israel, which is here mentioned for the first time in a non-Hebrew source, was not in Egypt, but already in Asia. Whether she was settled in Palestine may, however, be doubted. The absence of the determinative for country after the name "Israel," a determinative used in the inscription in connection with the names "Canaan," "Askelon," "Gezer," "Yenoam," and "Palestine," suggests that at this time Israel was a nomadic people, perhaps at the south of Palestine. If so, this was the time of their "wilderness-wandering."

Rameses III (1198–1167 B. C.) affords us another glimpse of the condition of Palestine and Syria. He was engaged in struggles with various sea-peoples from Asia Minor and the Islands, among whom were the ancestors of the Philistines. In his record of these expeditions he makes it evident that he held the country from Arvad southward.⁴¹ He also records one campaign in northern Syria.⁴² After this reign, however, Egypt lost all hold on her Asiatic possessions, so that when in the reign of Rameses XII (1118–1090 B. C.) a certain Wenamon was sent to Phoenicia for cedar, he found a Philistine king occupying Dor just south of Mt. Carmel,⁴³ and independent kings ruling in the cities of Phoenicia. This people had then already occupied the maritime plain of Palestine.

When after the time of Menephtah the curtain once more rises on the history of interior Palestine, our source of information is the Bible, and Israel is struggling for that supremacy there, which she

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 157–61.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 37.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 256–63.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 278.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 34.

finally won. Before her appearance, however, some Amorites had pushed across the Jordan from central Palestine, and established a kingdom in the region between the Jabbok and the Arnon, the capital of which was Heshbon (Num., chap. 21, and Deut., chaps. 1-4).

The facts, which for lack of space have been passed in review in this imperfect chronicle-like form, make it clear that before the coming of Israel the Holy Land, which stretches like a bridge across the desert between the two great civilizations of antiquity, had already experienced a long and varied history.



A PATRIARCH OF TODAY